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ABSTRACT

In the early 1990s, New Zealand attempted a comprehensive reform of educational administration in early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Polytechnic universities were included in calls for proposals. A comparative study of analogous Australian, American, Canadian, European, and Chilean institutions and interviews with managers and staff of 5 rural and urban New Zealand Polytechnics provides information on strategic management practice during 10 years of reform. Interviews revealed 18 strategic-management capacities to incorporate into survey measures. Practice was confirmed by a survey of senior managers and staff at 19 of 24 polytechnics. A majority of respondents advocated qualities of effective "leadership by example." Negative respondent comments included concern about emphasis on balancing budgets, inability to define effective leadership, and little contact with students. (TEJ)

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LEADERSHIP AND THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE IN NEW ZEALAND POLYTECHNICS

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In the early 1990s New Zealand polytechnics underwent radical and comprehensive reform of educational administration. The election of the Fourth Labour Government (July 1984 and in August 1987) set the stage for the reform of New Zealand education administration in early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education. The Labour Government had an agenda to review the whole of education administration with the setting up of the Task Force to Review Education Administration (the Picot Taskforce, 1987). The Treasury influence at this point in time must be acknowledged. The *Information Act* (1982) gave access to the two Treasury Reports (1984, 1987) which revealed the increasing influence of Treasury in Government Education policy.

The Picot Task Force (1988) showed that the administrative structure of education was over-centralised and made overly complex with too many decision points. The report signalled that radical change in educational administration was required to make progress (p xi). It also signalled concerns with the large number of young people leaving secondary school "disenchanted" with no formal qualifications. The report stated that polytechnics "had a major role to play" in the continuing education of these young people. Three different documents for early childhood, primary,

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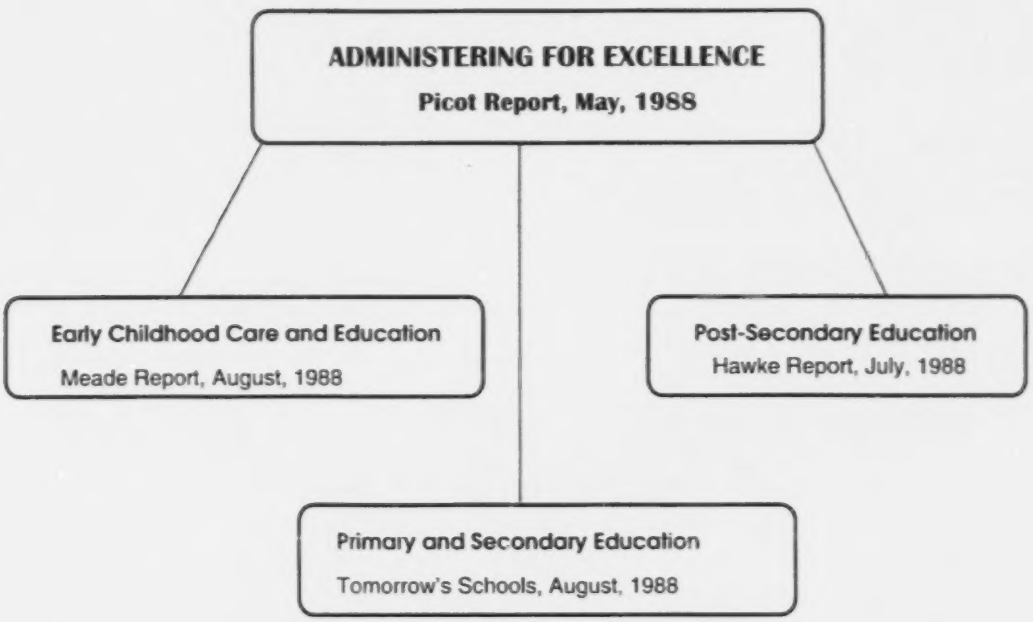
secondary and tertiary education were released to clarify implications by sector (see figure 1).

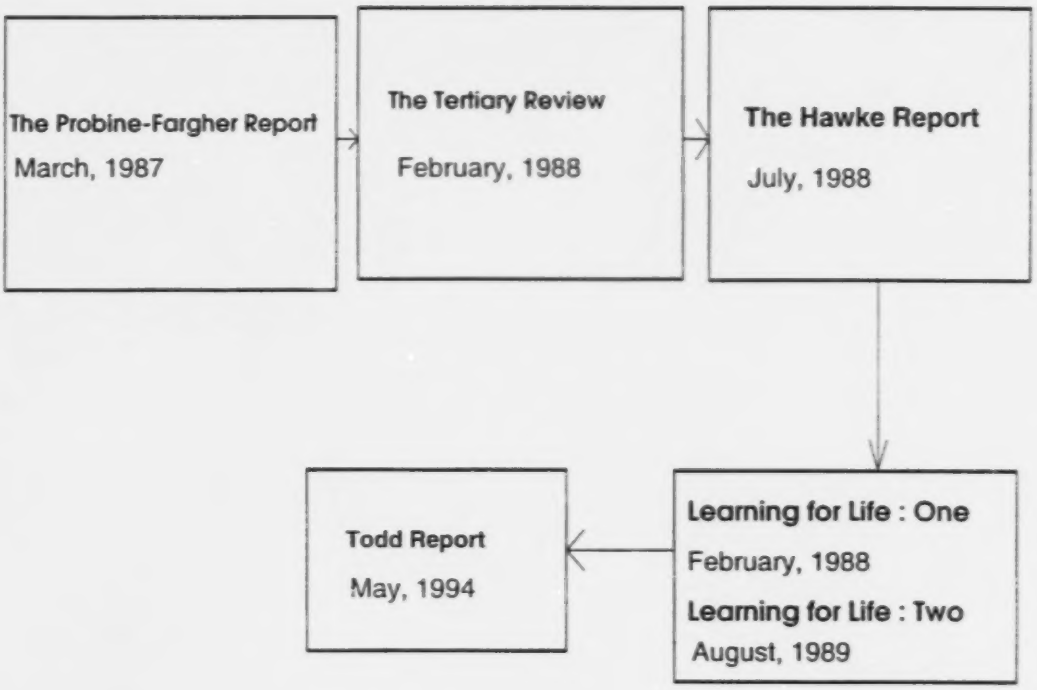
Figure 1: Reviews of New Zealand Educational Administration



Tertiary reviews relating to polytechnic education and training were the Probine Fargher Report, *The Management, Funding and Organisation of Continuing Education and Training*, (March 1987) and the Tertiary Reviews, *Report on Submissions to the Tertiary Review* (February 1988). These reviews were limited to specific areas and the Government required a more comprehensive report to clarify the implications of the Picot Report for the Post-Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) sector. *The Report of the Working Group on Post Compulsory Education and Training* (1988) was presented to Cabinet as a 'green paper.' The Government's decisions on PCET were published in the 'white paper' *Learning for Life: One*

(1988). The Government consulted more widely which resulted in the revision, *Learning for Life Two* (1989).

Figure 2: Reviews of Tertiary Education and Training



It is significant that although the Labour Government lost the election in 1991, the incoming National Government sustained the reform of educational administration. Polytechnics were expanding rapidly and the new Government was concerned about the funding implications of the escalating tertiary student population. The Todd Report (1994) advised on the funding of future growth in PCET education.

A study of polytechnics in New Zealand, the new Universities in Australia, Polytechnics in England, Junior Colleges in the United States, Community Colleges in British Columbia and Higher Education in Europe and in Chile were considered. International practice in tertiary education reform in the 1980s and the 1990s was

discussed. World wide, there was an increased emphasis on strategic planning as tertiary institutions were restructured. Change management, organisational development and educational leadership were integral in this study.

The international studies provided an international comparison for the five case studies of New Zealand Polytechnics in urban and regional areas. These case studies of Kowhai, Pohutukawa, Rimu, Kauri and Rata polytechnics provided information on strategic management practice during the ten year period post the Education Amendment Act (1990).

The six senior managers and staff interviewed at Pohutukawa Polytechnic commented on the difficulties encountered during the restructuring years. They also recalled the ongoing tension between senior management and academic staff which was finally resolved by the appointment of a new CEO. Whereas the case study of Rimu Polytechnic showed that change was managed more successfully by a co-operative relationship between council, management and staff. The eleven interviewees also recorded the consultative leadership style of the CEO who led the polytechnic through the reforms. The case studies signalled that strategic planning was a new concept when polytechnics were granted financial autonomy and the freedom for academic development.

The nine participants interviewed at Kauri Polytechnic acknowledged the development of a new middle-management infrastructure to provide systems for academic accountability, improved student services, and marketing requirements in a competitive educational environment. They identified the high cost and the increased

workload for academic staff with internal and external compliance of academic programmes.

Many senior managers and staff interviewed at Kowhai Polytechnic signalled that they welcomed the study as an opportunity to reflect after ten years of restructuring and changes. They also recorded that it was time to consolidate and to plan strategically.

In some cases, a different form of leadership was required to manage the polytechnic through the changes. However, in the case of Rata Polytechnic the same CEO had the vision, innovation and lateral thinking to lead the polytechnic through the changes. A General Manager was appointed to set up the financial and administrative infrastructure.

Councils had to adjust to a governance role while senior management were responsible for the appointment of staff and the daily operation. The competitive tertiary environment of twenty-five polytechnics, seven universities, two wananga and five colleges of education in the early 1990s resulted in vigorous marketing of programmes and the pursuit of an international market.

The five case studies of polytechnics identified the following strategic management capacities:

- Restructuring the Organisation
- Clarifying the Relationship between Management and Governance
- Improving Leadership at Middle and Senior Management Levels

- Introducing Financial Management Systems
- Strategic Planning
- Introducing Academic Quality Management Systems
- Introducing Academic Co-operation Between Polytechnics
- Recognising Previous Learning Experience of Students
- Developing Bi-cultural Initiatives
- Responding to Community Needs / Industry
- Responding to Student Needs
- Developing Marketing Strategies
- Developing International marketing
- Promoting Professional Development
- Advancing Technology / Communication
- Developing External Funding
- Developing Research
- Developing Buildings / Environment

The above constructs were used to develop a survey instrument to identify strategic management capacities in New Zealand polytechnics. Nineteen of the twenty-four polytechnics (identified P1-P19) participated in the national survey. Councillors, senior managers and staff (academic and allied) were surveyed to identify strategic management practice in their respective institutions. The study confirmed the above strategic management practices in nineteen polytechnics.

The majority of respondents to the survey advocated "leadership by example." They clearly identified the following effective leadership qualities which were required to lead their respective polytechnics through the changes:

- Co-operative and delegative
- Motivational and inspirational
- Natural coaches
- Set strategic direction participative leadership
- Willing to continue life long learning
- Authoritative yet with an open-door approach
- Collegial, collaborative and transactional
- Strong academic ethic
- Open, honest
- Concerned about people not money
- Open to new ideas
- Not to be defensive and aggressive
- To espouse values and build on core capabilities of staff aiming to do better
- To harness skills and knowledge of staff
- Hands on, pragmatic but academically well qualified.
- Prepared to take risks
- Entrepreneurial based on a sound understanding of education principles
- Broader visionary approach, greater 'daring' tempered by positive caution and meticulous implementation
- Consultative/inclusive/democratic
- Involve stakeholders, eg. local Iwi
- Decentralised leadership at faculty and programme levels

- Team approach

(P1, P2, P4, P5, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19)

Not all of the respondents commented positively about the current educational leadership in their respective polytechnics.

There was a concern with the emphasis on "balancing budgets" rather than "educational matters." The "drive towards quality management systems" involved too much paper work and did very little to ensure academic quality." Another concern raised was the erosion of professional development/staff development and the disestablishment of some staff development units in polytechnics.

The majority of respondents could not identify "effective educational leadership" in their particular polytechnics. Many respondents commented that their leaders were "managers not leaders." There was an overarching concern from many of the respondents that the real educational leadership was only evident at departmental or section level. They noted that the preoccupation of the senior management with strategic planning, financial accountability and quality management systems had resulted in the dilution of "educational leadership." Another concern was recorded that not many of the senior management team advertised their research interests or outputs or sustained teaching duties.

Several respondents commented that the majority of their senior managers were removed from the students with little direct contact. "A major portion of the management staff have absolutely no contact with students and have lost touch."

(P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P12, P13, P16, P17, P19)

At the time of the survey, one polytechnic had merged with a large university, another polytechnic had pending university status, and other polytechnics had formed strategic alliances with polytechnics or universities. It was timely to record the events of the past ten years when polytechnics had experienced massive changes in educational leadership, management structure and curriculum development.

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